

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
26 April 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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HIGHLIGHTS

US aircraft sank a 60-foot patrol craft on 26 April in the vicinity of the Quang Khe Naval Base.

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
UH-1B helicopters have reportedly killed an estimated 75 Viet Cong in Phuoc Thanh Province (Para. 1). A Viet Cong maritime infiltration attempt has been reported in Vinh Binh Province (Para. 3).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
Air Vice Marshal Ky and generals close to him reportedly have approved Premier Quat's suggestion to dissolve the Armed Forces Council quietly, but have not yet agreed to abolish the position of armed forces commander in chief (Para. 1). Premier Quat plans early cabinet changes as well as new diplomatic appointments (Para. 3). The Quat cabinet is also said to have agreed to replace military province officials and police chiefs in central Vietnam with civilians (Para. 4). The Viet Cong Liberation Front is reported to be holding a party conference beginning today (Para. 6).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: US and South Vietnamese planes conducted generally successful road and coastal interdiction missions against the southern DRV on 26 April. US Navy aircraft attacked and sank a 60-foot patrol craft in the vicinity of the Quang Khe Naval Base (Paras. 1-3).

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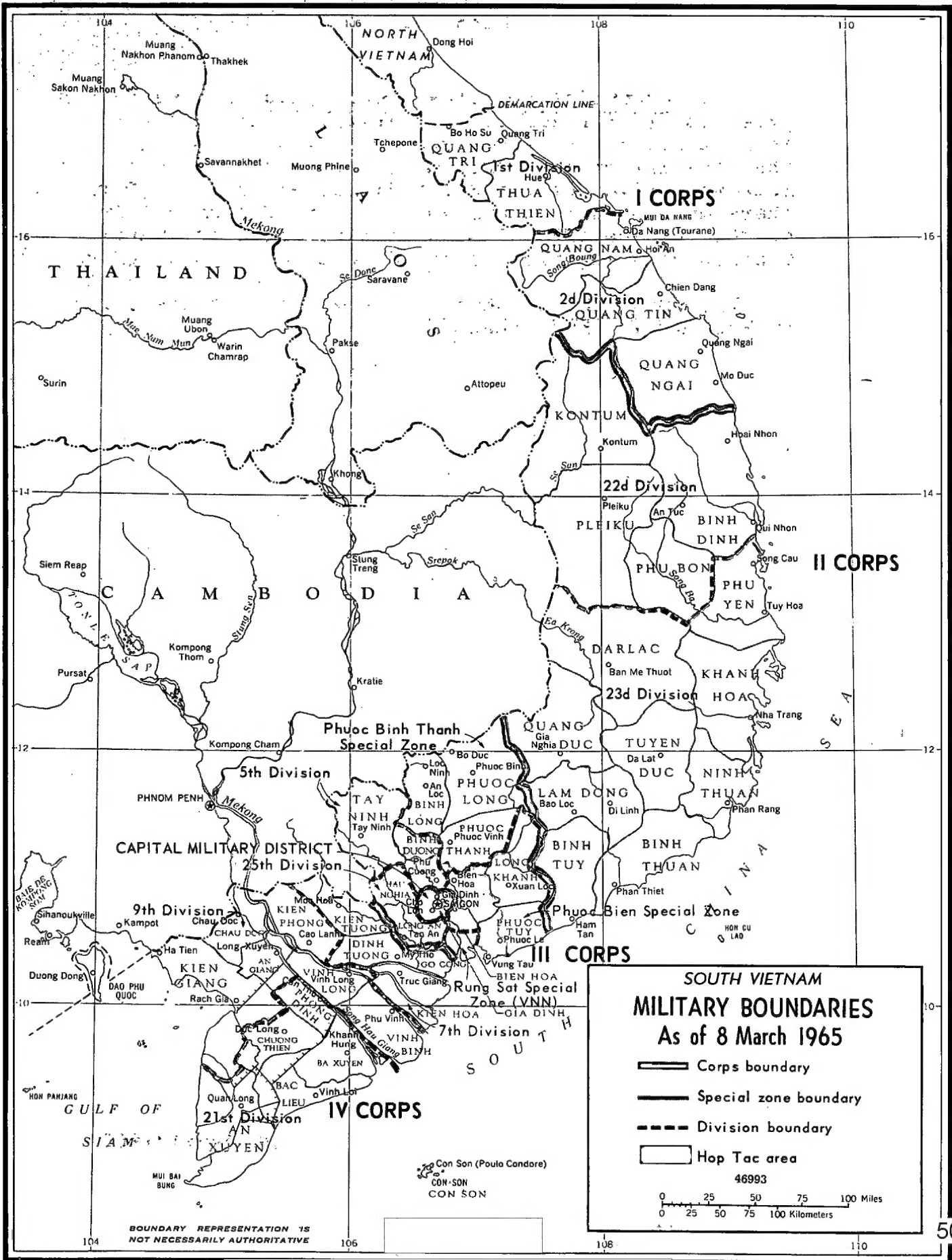
IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. Communist Political Developments: The Peiping press today highlighted Chou En-lai's farewell speech in Djakarta which reiterated the Communist position that the National Liberation Front is the "only genuine representative" of the South Vietnamese people (Para. 1). There have been no hints as to the nature or outcome of the Chinese-DRV talks in Peiping since the North Vietnamese delegation returned home on 23 April (Para. 3).

VI. Other Major Aspects: A mob has attacked the US Embassy in Phnom Penh.

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. An estimated 75 Communist guerrillas were reported killed in Phuoc Thanh Province on 24 April when five UH-1B helicopters on a visual surveillance mission attacked a group of Viet Cong personnel and camouflaged trucks caught in an open area. One helicopter received hits from ground fire.

2. MACV now estimates that a Viet Cong force of battalion strength was responsible for the 23 April mortar ambush of elements of two Vietnamese junk divisions and a Popular Forces platoon in Kien Hoa Province. Corrected final results of the action list friendly losses as 23 killed, seven wounded, ten missing, and 35 weapons captured. Exfiltrators reported enemy losses of 100 dead or wounded. The Viet Cong apparently withdrew into a mangrove swamp after the 50-minute assault. On 24 April, River Assault Group (RAG) units landed a Ranger battalion in the area. The Ranger force failed to establish initial contact with the Viet Cong, but plans to remain in the area for two days.

3. In Vinh Binh Province a VNAF flareship was directed to the mouth of the Bassac River on 23 April because of intelligence that three Viet Cong boats would attempt to infiltrate the area. No sightings were made. At first light on 24 April observation aircraft reported a boat 50 feet long and three large camouflaged sampans in the area. Strike aircraft were dispatched to the area, but failed to locate the targets.

4. MACV's military report for 24 April shows 46 Communist-initiated incidents, four of them occurring during the reporting period. Small-scale terrorism, sabotage, and harassing fire actions against government troops, hamlets, and outposts predominated.

5. Government operations of battalion strength or larger increased on 24 April from 22 to 25 in

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progress, with eight initiated and five terminated, none of which resulted in significant contact with the enemy.

6. Small-unit actions conducted on 24 April increased to 2,529. Only six contacts were made with the Viet Cong, with minor losses reported on both sides.

7. USAF activity continued to reflect an increase, particularly in the number of logistic support missions flown, while VNAF operations again displayed a slight decline. Pilot reports from countrywide combat air operations conducted on 24 April (exclusive of the Phuoc Thanh action cited in paragraph 1) list 44 Viet Cong killed and 134 structures destroyed or damaged.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Premier Quat on 24 April reportedly won the agreement of Air Vice Marshal Ky and other generals close to Ky for his idea of dissolving the Armed Forces Council. [REDACTED]

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the dissolution will take place in the immediate future, but without a formal announcement. The generals who were consulted, however, have not yet approved Quat's proposal to abolish the role of commander in chief and to create a chief of the Joint General Staff.

2. According to another report, Deputy Premier and Defense Minister General Thieu agrees with Quat that the commander in chief position should be eliminated because its responsibilities, accrued when General Khanh held the post, are too great for any one man. Thieu believes the best solution would be to relieve General Minh and have himself appointed chief of the Joint General Staff; he fears, however, that in this role he would become a target of the Buddhists. Thieu believes Quat prefers to keep him in the deputy premiership.

3. Premier Quat reportedly also plans to make changes in the cabinet when civilian Deputy Premier Tuyen returns from Africa. These would involve replacement of the interior minister, a member of Tuyen's party, as well as the appointment of new ministers of economy, education, health, and labor. Quat also plans at the same time to fill certain diplomatic posts, although he still has reservations about at least one prospective appointee.

4. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] before Tuyen's departure on 12 April, it was agreed at a cabinet meeting to change most of the province, district, and police chiefs in central Vietnam, generally replacing military chiefs with civilians. The rationale for the changes is that the military personnel are not "well-versed" in

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[REDACTED]

all facets of their administrative responsibilities, and that corruption is widespread. I Corps Commander General Thi, a strong advocate of appointing civilians, already has proposed candidates for two province chiefs in his corps area. As has occurred in the past, however, extensive provincial changes could lead to a slackening of activity as new appointees learn their jobs; the replacement of police officials presumably would also increase the power of Police Director Colonel Lieu, already a source of concern to Catholic circles.

5. Suspended former Saigon area commander General Dong has [REDACTED] been informed by Commander in Chief Minh that the charges of corruption against him have been dropped, with the concurrence of Premier Quat. Dong, who has requested an official announcement to clear his name, has been offered a temporary position as commander of the NCO Academy at Nha Trang rather than reinstatement, and is still considering his response.

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[REDACTED]

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7. A substantial expansion of the political apparatus of the National Liberation Front appears to have paralleled the Communist military build-up in the northern half of South Vietnam during the past year.

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[REDACTED]

During the month of November 1964, the volume of news reported on the northern regional area by the Liberation News Agency reached a level double that of any month in 1963. Among other things, the news accounts reported the establishment of typical Front mass organizations for workers, women, peasants, and minority ethnic groups at both the regional and provincial levels.

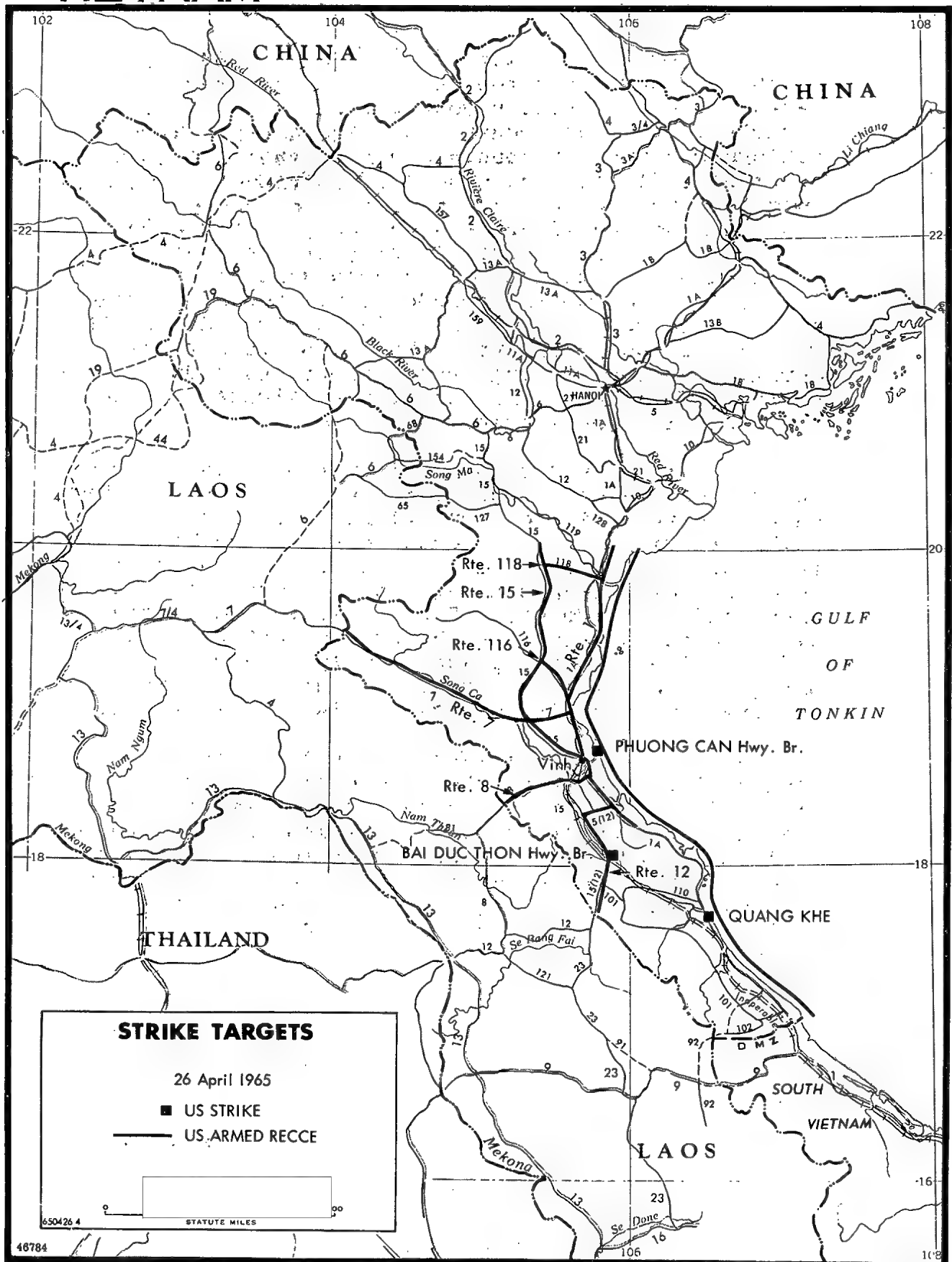
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NORTH VIETNAM



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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. US and South Vietnamese aircraft conducted eight armed reconnaissance missions along the DRV coast and various roads in southern North Vietnam on 26 April. All aircraft returned safely.

2. US Navy aircraft attacked and sank a 60-foot patrol craft in the vicinity of the Quang Khe Naval Base. Initial pilot reports describe the target as a P-4 motor torpedo boat.

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3. US Air Force F-105 fighter bombers on armed reconnaissance of Routes 7, 8, and 12 caused further damage to the Bai Duc Thon bridge, although it is still standing. Several cuts were made on Route 8, and Route 7 was cratered. In addition, two boxcars were severely damaged along with a truck park, supply area, and a bulldozer. US Navy aircraft operating along Route 15 between Vinh and the 20th parallel left two trucks burning and heavily damaged a small bridge. Vietnamese aircraft were unable to find any targets during their road reconnaissance missions.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Chou En-lai's farewell speech in Djakarta, reiterating the position that the Liberation Front is "the only genuine representative" of the South Vietnamese people, was highlighted by the Chinese Communist press on 26 April. Chou asserted that the Viet Cong had "liberated" three fourths of the land and two thirds of the people of South Vietnam, and that the "puppet regime" in Saigon was "totally unqualified" to represent the South Vietnamese people. Chou also repeated Peiping's support for the Hanoi four-point formula for negotiations, declaring it to be the "only way" to a peaceful settlement. He warned that "failing" a US troop withdrawal from South Vietnam, there can be no talk about a peaceful settlement.

2. On 25 April the Chinese Government started showing a series of inflammatory anti-American "documentary" films on Vietnam in 27 major Chinese cities. The films depict US bombing of North Vietnam and alleged American atrocities in the South. In Peiping and its outskirts alone, more than 60 movie houses have reportedly arranged showings of the films, produced by the Liberation Front, the North Vietnamese Army, and China's central newsreel studio.

3. There has been no indication of the results of the DRV - Chinese Communist talks in Peiping since the return of the North Vietnamese delegation to Hanoi on 23 April. The Chinese account of the departure simply reported the event. The Hanoi version stated that the "friendship visit" to the USSR and China had ended "successfully."

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. The government-sponsored demonstration against the US Embassy in Phnom Penh today is further evidence that Prince Sihanouk believes prospects are bleak for an international conference on Cambodia. The demonstration, ostensibly mounted to protest "slanderous" statements in Newsweek magazine about Sihanouk's mother Queen Kossamak, apparently was designed to underline Sihanouk's speeches on 23 and 24 April which took a negative stance on US and South Vietnamese participation in a conference. Planning for the demonstration apparently was under way before the substance of Secretary Rusk's 25 April statement on a Cambodian conference reached Phnom Penh. There has been no official Cambodian reaction so far to the secretary's statement.

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